



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

RATTLESNAKE WRANGLER Danielle Wall holds one of her Southwestern speckled snakes on her property in Landers, Calif.

Wider push for \$20 hourly wage

Labor advocates seek a higher statewide minimum for all after recent boost in food, healthcare industries.

BY MACKENZIE MAYS

SACRAMENTO — Stephon Harris makes \$16.35 an hour at the Rancho San Miguel Market, ringing customers up for pints of fresh salsas and masa.

A few hundred feet away, at a Jack in the Box drive-through, workers are making about \$4 more an hour thanks to California's mandatory \$20 minimum wage for fast-food employees that kicked in last month.

"I would like to make that," Harris, 21, said as he assisted customers.

He is among California's low-wage workers who are left out of sector-specific minimum wages recently approved by the Legislature, with hospital workers — including gift shop cashiers and cleaners — set to get at least \$25 an hour under another similarly hard-fought deal in the state Capitol.

Harris, who lives with his parents and says the grocery store job is temporary, isn't mad. He just wants in too.

"In fast food, you have to deal with a lot. People are more rude to you," he said. "But everybody wants to make more. Sixteen dollars an hour is definitely not enough if you're trying to support a family."

The fast-food and healthcare wage requirements join a separate patchwork of mandates ordered by some California cities that require employers to pay more than the state's \$16 hourly minimum wage.

Now workers like Harris, still making the standard minimum, are asking: What about us?

"Clearly the Legislature understands that some workers deserve \$20, so they must understand that everybody deserves \$20," said Saru Jayaraman, president of One Fair Wage, a national organization calling for higher salaries in the service sector.

[See Wages, A6]

A snake wrangler aims to show the critters' soft sides

Joshua Tree's Danielle Wall is transforming how locals interact with the animals

By Alex Wigglesworth
REPORTING FROM LANDERS, CALIF.

Spring marks the start of the high desert's slow season. Beneath a blanket of scorching heat, tourism drops. Restaurants and stores shorten their hours.

But for Danielle Wall, business begins to pick up.

The tattooed, cutoff-clad 29-year-old has become the Joshua Tree area's premier rattlesnake wrangler. From April through October, she fields phone calls, texts and social media messages from people who want her to remove venomous visitors from their properties.

Her work has earned her a front-row seat to the profound changes that have reshaped this slice of the Mojave Desert over the last few years, as pandemic-era policies attracted hordes of investors and new residents. In

the process, Wall has also transformed how locals interact with the much-maligned — unfairly, she's quick to point out — reptiles.

"I always tell people I'm afraid of two things: men and distracted drivers, and that's it," Wall said.

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It's 12:45 p.m. in mid-April, a Tuesday. Wall is on her way to her eighth snake call of the day.

Four resulted in successful removals. Two ended up being for nonvenomous snakes, which she typically does not relocate. And one rattlesnake beat her, "fair and square."

"That thing — it outsmarted me. It did, man," she says, recalling [See Rattlesnakes, A8]

Answers elusive in teen's death

Family wants to know how she was able to grab gun from deputy and shoot herself.

BY KERI BLAKINGER

When he got home from work early on a Sunday afternoon in March, Alex Gutierrez called for his youngest daughter and smiled as she popped out of her room to greet him.

She was usually buoyant and effusive, but this time she really hammed it up, hugging and kissing the case of Propel Fitness Water he'd brought home from the store. That it was her favorite seemed only fitting for a girl always in motion.

The 67-year-old La Puente man laughed at his teen's performance, then headed inside to take a nap.

In the past, 17-year-old Johanna Gonzalez had struggled with mental health problems, hearing voices and flying into uncontrollable fits and outbursts. But today seemed to be a good day.

Then, around 7 p.m. Gutierrez woke up to the sounds of angry voices. Johanna screamed at her mother, then flew out of the house. The sky was already dark, but the teen stormed [See Johanna, A12]

China's latest threat? The DINKs

More couples forgo having offspring though one-child policy is history

BY STEPHANIE YANG

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Shorthand for gainfully employed U.S. couples whose only responsibilities were to themselves, the acronym DINK — dual income, no kids — was coined to capture the unabashed materialism of the 1980s.

Four decades later, the term has made a comeback,

with millennials embracing it on social media to flaunt their free time, lavish spending habits and the other perks of choosing to be child-free.

It has taken off far beyond the United States, including in one country where it would have been hard to imagine just a decade ago: China.

China famously once limited couples to one child

each to control population growth. That led to a shortage of young people, and in 2016 the government upped the limit to two children. In 2021, it became three.

Amid deep economic uncertainty, a growing number of Chinese are opting for another number: zero.

Many proudly refer to themselves as DINKs — using the acronym in English — or *dingke*, the phonetic

translation in Mandarin.

Xu Kaikai, 29, said being DINKs gives her and her 36-year-old boyfriend a greater sense of control over their lives.

"It reduces some of the anxieties about age," she said.

She works in advertising in Shanghai, where her boyfriend is a project manager for a construction company [See China, A4]

ROGER CORMAN, 1926 – 2024

Pioneer filmmaker was king of B movies

BY DENNIS MCLELLAN



PERRY RIDDLE Los Angeles Times

INDEPENDENT STREAK

Roger Corman directed more than 50 films and produced over 350, nurturing young Hollywood talent along the way.

Roger Corman, the legendary independent Hollywood producer and director whose long string of profitable low-budget movies such as "Attack of the Crab Monsters," "The Little Shop of Horrors" and "The Wild Angels" earned him a reputation as the "King of the B's," has died.

Corman, who helped launch the careers of filmmakers, writers and actors in Hollywood and beyond, died Thursday at his home in Santa Monica, according to a statement from Corman's family. He was 98.

"His films were revolutionary and iconoclastic, and captured the spirit of an age," Corman's family said. "When asked how he would like to be remembered, he said, 'I was a filmmaker, just that.'"

In a nearly seven-decade career, Corman directed more than 50 films, most of which he also produced. In all, [See Corman, A6]

Politics lagging on housing costs

Despite soaring prices, affordability has never emerged as a defining issue in California. **PERSPECTIVES, A2**

Israel deepens push into Rafah

Egypt issues strongest objection to offensive, saying it will join case alleging genocide being committed. **WORLD, A3**

FLiRT variants raising concerns

Caution is urged ahead of summer as immunity wanes for those with recent COVID-19 vaccine. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather

Turning sunny. L.A. Basin: 75/56. **B6**

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